

Message Text

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 01 COTONO 00788 311030Z
ACTION AF-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SS-15 HA-05 IO-13 CIAE-00 DODE-00
PM-05 H-01 INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01
SP-02 ICA-11 EB-08 /090 W
-----020119 010120Z /64

R 311000Z MAY 78
FM AMEMBASSY COTONOU
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 778
INFO AMEMBASSY LAGOS

C O N F I D E N T I A L COTONOU 788

FROM CHARGE

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINT, DM, NI
SUBJ: BENNETT-HAMZA CASE: NIGERIAN ATTITUDES TOWARD BENIN

1. DURING FAREWELL RECEPTION FOR OUR CONSUL MAY 26, I SPOKE WITH NIGERIAN AMB IHAMA CONCERNING BENNETT CASE. I NOTED THAT OUR DEPUTY ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF STATE HAD MADE A SPECIAL TRIP TO COTONOU THAT DAY TO TAKE UP MATTER WITH BENINESE OFFICIALS, AND I WONDERED WHAT THE NIGERIANS PLANNED TO DO FOR HAMZA. IHAMA TOLD ME THAT HAMZA'S ARREST HAD NOW BECOME A MAJOR IRRITANT IN NIGERIAN-BENINESE RELATIONS, TO THE EXTENT THAT NIGERIA WOULD PROBABLY DELAY A PROPOSED STATE VISIT OF GENERAL OBASSANJO UNTIL HAMZA HAD BEEN RELEASED. IHAMA SAID THAT SINCE HE HAD ALREADY MET WITH PRESIDENT KEREKOU AND RECEIVED NO SATISFACTION, AND AS NIGERIAN EMBASSY HAD RECEIVED NO RESPONSE TO ANY OF ITS COMMUNICATIONS, IHAMA FELT THAT IT WAS UP TO THE BENINESE TO MAKE NEXT MOVE. HE SAID THAT GENERAL OBASSANJO DID NOT WANT TO BE IN THE POSITION OF SEEMING TO PLEAD FOR HAMZA'S RELEASE WHEN IT WAS A SIMPLE JUDICIARY MATTER WHICH COULD HAVE BEEN SETTLED LONG AGO IN THE BENINESE COURTS. IHAMA PREDICTED THAT THE LONGER HAMZA IS HELD, THE GREATER WOULD BE THE DETERIORATION IN RELATIONS BETWEEN NIGERIA AND BENIN. THOMPSON
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NNN

Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 jan 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: DETENTION, GOVERNMENT REACTIONS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 31 may 1978
Decaption Date: 01 jan 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 20 Mar 2014
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1978COTON000788
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: D780228-0416
Format: TEL
From: COTONOU
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1978/newtext/t1978054/aaaaadge.tel
Line Count: 55
Litigation Code IDs:
Litigation Codes:
Litigation History:
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Message ID: 3b398c9a-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Office: ACTION AF
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 2
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: n/a
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 19 apr 2005
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 2636857
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: BENNETT-HAMZA CASE: NIGERIAN ATTITUDES TOWARD BENIN
TAGS: PINT, BDIS, DM, NI, (HAMZA)
To: STATE
Type: TE
vdkgvwkey: odhc://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/3b398c9a-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Sheryl P. Walter
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
20 Mar 2014
Markings: Sheryl P. Walter Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 20 Mar 2014